

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) An improved dough product comprising:
dough that is mechanically formed into a shape and packaged;
gas pockets formed within the dough through a proofing step, wherein yeast within the dough produces CO₂ gas causing the gas pockets;
live yeast within the dough that enables the dough upon baking to further product CO₂ gas and expand thereby; and
a ~~finally heated~~ superproofed skin on the dough, which has been seared through a superproofing step that warms the dough to a temperature that ~~kills~~ is effective for inactivating at least some yeast on the skin but does not kill the live yeast within the dough.
2. (original) The dough product of Claim 1, wherein the shape is produced by a mechanical process selected from the group consisting of: cutting and stamping.
3. (original) The dough product of Claim 1, wherein the skin enables the dough to be picked up off a conveying pan through the use of suction cups placed on top of the dough.
4. (original) The dough product of Claim 1, wherein the dough is packaged in a condition selected from: a frozen condition and a refrigerated condition.
5. (original) The dough product of Claim 1, wherein the dough is packaged in the presence of oxygen.

6. (currently amended) An improved dough product comprising:
dough that is mechanically formed into a shape and packaged;
gas pockets formed within the dough through a proofing step, wherein yeast within the dough produces CO₂ gas causing the gas pockets;

live yeast within the dough that enables the dough upon baking to further produce CO₂ gas and expand thereby; and

a superproofed skin on the dough, which has been produced by searing the dough so that the ~~skin~~ dough achieves a temperature of between ~~120°F (45°C)~~ 140°F (60°C) and 160°F (71°C).

7. (original) The dough product of Claim 6, which includes gluten.

8. (original) The dough product of Claim 6, which includes at least two percent gluten.

9. (original) The dough product of Claim 6, which includes ascorbic acid.

10. (original) The dough product of Claim 6, which includes gluten and ascorbic acid.

11. (currently amended) A process for preparing a dough product comprising the steps of:

proofing, which includes heating a quantity of dough in a temperature controlled environment for a first amount of time so that yeast within the dough quantity produces CO₂ gas and so that the dough quantity expands;

superproofing, which includes further heating the dough quantity to a temperature of more than 140°F and less than 160°F (71°C) in a second amount of time; and

packaging the dough quantity without further heating.

12. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the step of proofing includes heating the dough quantity to less than 120°F (49°C).

13. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the step of proofing includes maintaining the dough in a humidity controlled environment.

14. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the step of superproofing includes heating the dough quantity to between 130°F (54°C) and 160°F (71°C).

15. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the second amount of time is less than five minutes.

16. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the steps of proofing and superproofing are performed in different pieces of equipment.

17. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the steps of proofing and superproofing are performed in a single piece of equipment.

18. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the step of superproofing is performed in an oven having a plurality of zones, at least one zone heating the dough quantity and at least one zone drying the dough quantity.

19. (previously presented) The process of claim 18, wherein at least one zone pre-heats the dough quantity before and at least one zone dries the dough quantity after the at least one zone heats the dough quantity.

20. (original) The process of Claim 11, wherein the step of superproofing is performed while the dough quantity is conveyed on a pan.

21. (original) The process of Claim 20, which includes the step of lifting the dough quantity from the pan after the step of superproofing the dough quantity.

22. (original) The process of Claim 11, which includes the step of mixing the dough quantity before the step of proofing, wherein mixing includes adding at least one dough strengthener selected from: gluten, ascorbic acid and baking powder.

23. (currently amended) A process for preparing a self-rising dough product comprising the steps of:

heating a quantity of dough in a temperature controlled environment for a first amount of time to less than 120°F (49°C) so that yeast within the dough quantity produces CO₂ gas and so that the dough quantity expands;

further heating the dough quantity to between ~~130°F (54.4°C)~~ 140°F (60°C) and 160°F (71°C) in a second amount of time; and

freezing the dough quantity.

24. (original) The process of Claim 23, which includes the step of storing the dough quantity in refrigerator and thawing the frozen dough quantity to a refrigeration temperature.